

Curriculum changes presented to Chippewa board

By Thomas Franz✉

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CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Administrators from Chippewa Valley Schools continue to provide updates for curriculum changes in the near future.

During a Board of Education meeting May 2, Director of Curriculum Pam Jones gave a presentation on several curriculum changes at the elementary and middle school levels, as well as updates on professional development for instructors.

“One of our big priorities over the past year has been improving language arts instruction and ensuring that we have a viable K-12 curriculum so students build skills all the way through 12th grade,” Jones said.

At the elementary level, the district will implement a pair of new programs which integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening. They are Houghton-Mifflin’s “Journey” program and McGraw-Hill’s “Wonders.”

“We still want to meet all students’ needs of where they’re at, but we also want to raise the rigor and provide more opportunities to read rich, high-level literature that maybe is above a level we currently have in our classrooms. It’s all about challenging kids,” Jones said.

Jones added that the new programs will help teachers connect skills like reading and writing, which are currently separate programs.

“We’re looking for something to help students write about the reading they’ve done, which is more in line with the current Michigan standards that want students reading informational and narrative texts, and then writing about what they’ve read. Our current program doesn’t do that,” Jones said.

At the middle school level, a McGraw-Hill program called “StudySync” will be implemented to create more blended learning with a heavier emphasis on utilizing technology components.

Language arts curricular leader Jessica Bright said the program is in line with the district’s goal of implementing technology for each class, but the emphasis on a middle school program is to increase preparedness for high school.

“We’ve been really trying to provide support for our high school teachers to increase rigor in the classroom to better prepare students for the SAT, to have them college and career ready,” Bright said.

In the area of professional development, Jones said each teacher in the district completed CITW (classroom instruction that works) training over the past year. Teachers also received training in Kagan programs, which are designed to foster student engagement.

“Every teacher in Chippewa Valley Schools has been trained in highly effective classroom instruction practices,” Jones said. “It’s really about developing collaborative skills in students, and those 21st century skills of creativity, working together and working cooperatively.”

Science courses will also be altered in the near future after state standards were adjusted this past November. Jones said a committee has been formed to look at changing high schools science courses to be more inclusive of science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM, classes.

“It’s about students really engaging, being scientists and doing science inquiry, getting away from the old way of following a recipe and getting the same answer you were told to get,” Jones said. “Now they’re presenting their own problems and solving their own problems, which is in line with the 21st century skills that employers want students to be problem solvers.”

Jones said the new courses could be implemented in the fall of 2017.

With a restructuring of middle school courses taking place, an eighth-grade Spanish class is being developed for fall 2017. Currently, middle school students take a foreign culture course which introduces them to the three foreign languages offered in high school, which are German, French and Spanish.

A middle school Lego robotics course and a coding class are being piloted for this upcoming fall, with full implementation taking place in 2017.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Staff Writer Thomas Franz covers Macomb Township, Chippewa Valley Schools and the Macomb County Board of Commissioners for the Macomb Township Chronicle. He also covers sports primarily for the Shelby-Utica News. He has worked for C & G Newspapers since 2013 and attended Michigan State University.
